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EDITORIAL

What Are We Trying to Do to the CIA?

It is just possible, if we all manage to work ourselves into a wild enough lather, that the current flap over the CIA can be escalated to the point where it will destroy the nation's intelligence organization. It almost seems that this is what some of the breast-beaters would like to do.

One day we have a disclosure that a student organization has been receiving covert funds so that young Americans can compete with young Communists at world student meetings. Then, suddenly, nothing will do but that every traceable operation of the CIA must be laid bare to public view, commented upon in tones of pious horror, investigated, sermonized, deplored and punished, until the terrible guilt of it all has been established for all time, for all the world to see.

And what, precisely, are we guilty of? Why, of using our wits and available means to compete in a battle just as real, dirty and deadly serious as any shooting war in which we could engage.

Confronted by adversaries who threw the full power and wealth of the state into the effort to mold and control world opinion, we did not abandon the field to them. Instead, we devoted some public funds to seeing to it that Americans could confront the totalitarians in the intellectual lists abroad, speaking their minds in representing the views of a relatively free society.

It worked, incidentally. A wide variety of Americans, most of whom never knew the source of the funds backing them, proved more than able over the years to hold their own in confrontation with disciplined, professional Communist agents. They prevented the takeover of numerous international organizations and established others which have contributed substantially to the global cause of freedom.

Consider, for example, the experience of Gloria Steinem, as interestingly reported in yesterday's Washington Post. A New York writer, Miss Steinem was director of something called "The Independent Research Service," which took CIA money to send several hundred young Americans to World Youth festivals in Vienna and Helsinki in 1959 and 1962.

Miss Steinem said she worked closely

that few of the students who took those trips knew that the CIA was picking up the tab.

"I never felt I was being dictated to at all," she said. "I found them (the CIA men with whom she worked) liberal and farsighted and open to an exchange of ideas. . . . They wanted to do what we wanted to do—present a healthy, diverse view of the United States."

She was backed up by Dennis Shaul, another spokesman for the organization, who said: "We had Minnesota school-teachers who were further right than Bill Buckley as well as members of Students for a Democratic Society. Nobody told them what to do."

Bear in mind, except for such American participation financed by CIA funds, these festivals were completely dominated by Communists, all financed and controlled by their governments. Yet, says Shaul, "The Helsinki festival was a disaster from their point of view and I think we can take a good deal of credit for that."

Well now, why not? Is this really something that has to be apologized for? Who is corrupted by such an operation? Who would have paid the Americans' expenses if the CIA hadn't?

"The CIA," says Miss Steinem, "was the only (organization) with enough guts and foresight to see that youth and student affairs were important." And here, the lady puts her finger on an important point.

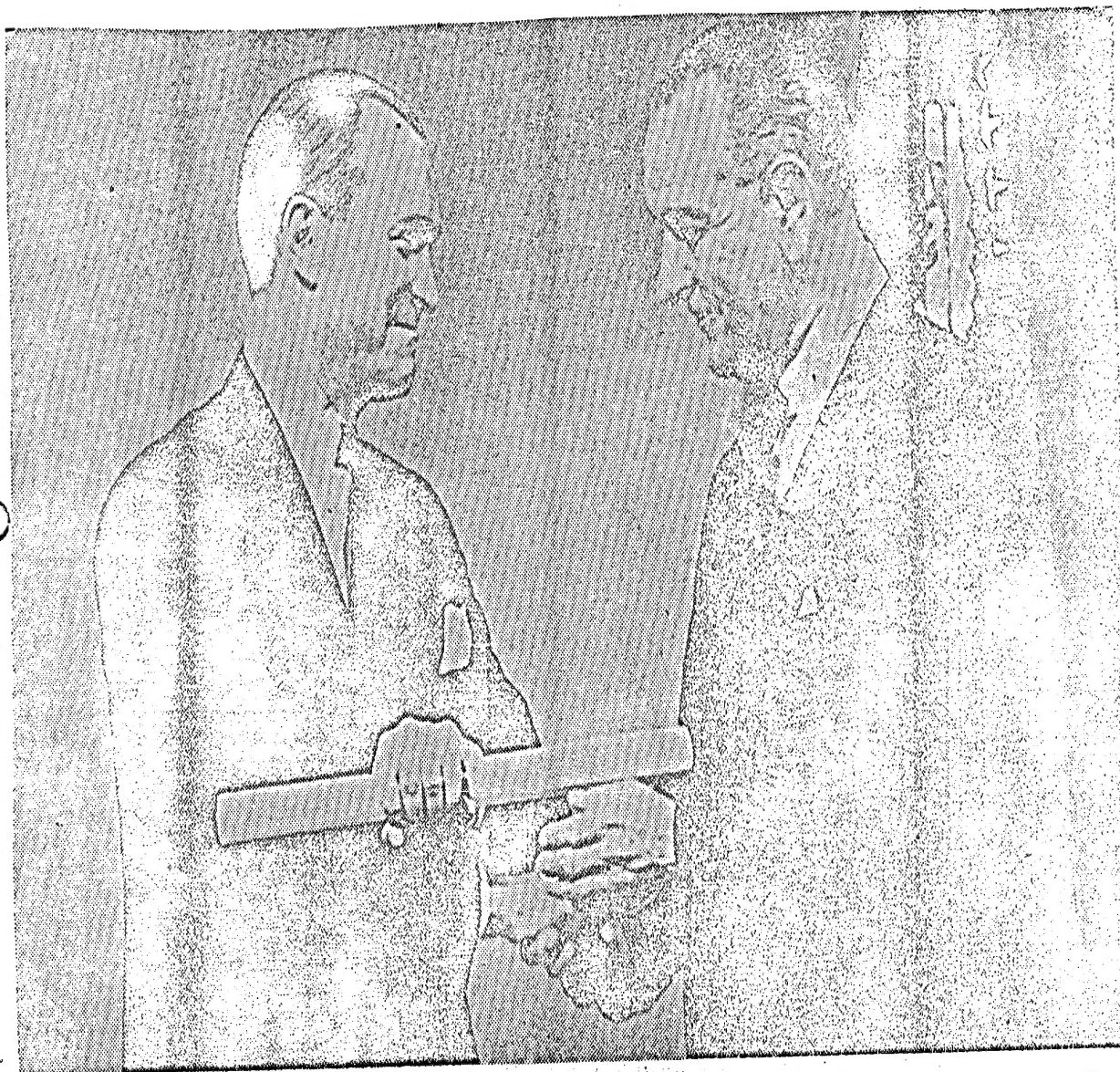
Of course, it would have been better if this sort of thing could have been done without subterfuge. It is too bad that private funds were not available for these purposes. It would have been healthier, lacking such private sources, for our government to have appropriated openly the necessary monies, through the State Department, U.S. Information Agency or some other "respectable" organization. Even though no such alternative may have been available when these programs were initiated in the early 1950s, it would have been advisable to switch them away from CIA support as soon as that became possible.

No one, however, can possibly defend all the details of any one of these operations. No doubt there have been

messy procedures which, when exposed, prove embarrassing. There is, one inevitably recalls, a saying about making omelettes and breaking eggs.

What is beyond comprehension in all this, however, is the monumental naivete involved in the apparent shock reaction to these disclosures on the part of otherwise knowledgeable people. After all, what have the outraged gentlemen supposed was going on all this time on the sprawling acres out at Langley? Of all the endeavors of the CIA, the effort to create outlets abroad for the expression of American opinion must surely rank as one of the milder. This is not, be it noted, a tea party that we have been engaged in. This is a viciously contested undercover war against shrewd, dedicated enemies who happen to be quite unhampered by nice-Nellie scruples. The need to press this fight has all along been recognized by the top leadership of the country. The procedures that suddenly evoke such outraged reactions were not dreamed up privately by the CIA. They were directed from the top, and properly so.

The idea that an organization like the CIA can conduct its operations while restrained by a sort of daisy-chain of clergymen, den mothers and liberal politicians—such a notion is simply absurd. For our part, we hope that the present hysteria will be calmed with a rational inquiry conducted by responsible and realistic men who have some knowledge of the very serious problems involved. We are inclined to suspect that they, and the public, will end up concluding that the world has not, after all, ended—and that, in doing a job which had to be done, our intelligence organization has not done too badly.



CIA Director Richard Helms is congratulated by President after being sworn in.